DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 754 EC 220 259

AUTHOR	Racino, Julie Ann
TITLE	Site Visit Report: Community Work Services.
INSTITUTION	Syracuse Univ., NY. Center on Human Policy.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Handicapped Research (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	16 Oct 85
CONTRACT	300-85-0076
NOTE	10p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Syracuse University, Center on Human Policy, Research and Training Center on Community Integration, 724 Comstock Ave., Syracuse, NY 13244-4230 ($1.25).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adults; Community Programs; Community Services; Demonstration Programs; *Developmental Disabilities; *Employment; Individualized Programs; *Job Placement; On the Job Training; *Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Supported Work Programs

ABSTRACT

The site visit report describes the private, non-profit Community Work Services program located in Madison, Wisconsin, which provides community-based vocational services to adults (currently 33) with a wide range of developmental disabilities. The program philosophy is that all persons should have the option of working in individually arranged and meaningful community-based jobs and provides whatever level of training, assistance and support an individual requires for such a placement. Some of the promising practices employed by the program include: matching the person to the job; positive relationships with employers and coworkers; flexible, individually designed supports; commitment to the individual; on-site job training; and staffing. (DB)

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SITE VISIT REPORT

COMMUNITY WORK SERVICES

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SITE VISIT REPORT
COMMUNITY WORK SERVICES

October 16, 1985

Julie Ann Racino
Associate Director, Community Integration Project
Center on Human Policy
Syracuse University
724 Comstock Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13244-4230
(315) 423-3851

This report was supported through Contract No. 300-85-0076 between the Center on Human Policy, Syracuse University, and the National Institute on Handicapped Research, U. S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the U. S. Department of Education and no endorsement should be inferred.

I. Introduction

This report is based on a site visit to Community Work Services on October 16, 1985. The information is the result of visits to three work sites and a discussion with one of the key staff members. This report is designed to share information on "promising practices" and "good ideas" for serving people with severe disabilities in integrated work settings.

II. Background

Community Work Services, Inc., is a private, non-profit corporation located in Madison, Wisconsin. Started in April 1984, Community Work Services provides community-based vocational services to adults with a wide range of developmental disabilities.

They currently serve 33 clients, 30 of whom are in community jobs and 3 of whom still need a place to work. All people placed in jobs have retained their positions. The individuals who receive services range from people labeled as mildly to severely disabled. They also serve some people who have brain injuries. Approximately one-half of the clients come from public school programs in Madison, programs that have an integrated work component. About one-half of the referrals come from segregated settings such as sheltered workshops, institutions, and nursing homes.

Community Work Services believes that all persons should be afforded the option of working in individually arranged

and individually meaningful community-based jobs. The mission of Community Work Service is to provide whatever level of training, assistance and support an individual requires in order to be successful in a community job placement.

Community Work Services provides a variety of services designed to meet the specific vocational needs of each client. Services include assessment, job development/ placement, job modification, on-the-job training, job retention, on-site support, vocational service plan development and coordination of resources. Services are available for as long and as often as needed for each client.

The program is supported primarily through the Dane County Unified Services Board with additional funds from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), and donations. DVR funds are used for initial on-the-job training; DVR also pays a placement fee if the person remains on the job for 60 days. The County Unified Services Board provides funding for the long-term support of clients. Ongoing costs range from $1,800-$5,500/year/person.

III. "Promising Practices"

This agency has a variety of strengths and "good ideas" to share with others about providing integrated vocational services. The following is a sampling of some of their positive approaches:

A. Matching the person to the job. Many vocational placement personnel "develop" jobs and then try to find people to match the jobs. This agency develops jobs only with a specific person in mind. This is not just a semantic difference, but has implications throughout the vocational process. For example, in order to locate a job that matches the person, it is critical that the job developer gets to know the person first. Thus, the assessment process involves extensive meetings with the person with a disability in a variety of different settings both at home and in the community. As another example, the agency is able to give the employer specific examples of what the person might be able to do, work out job modifications based on that person's abilities and give the employer a "feel" for the person themselves (and why they would want this kind of work).

B. Relationships with employers and coworkers. Unlike the hard sell, business approach of many job developers, Community Work Services recognizes that employee productivity is only one factor important to employers. Particularly with small and medium size family businesses, Community Work Services has found that it is important that: (1) the employer knows that you are invested and committed to their business and in getting the job done the way they want it done; (2) the employer knows why the integrated job site is important and how the fading out process will work; (3) the employer can see that you like the person; and (4) the employer knows that he/she could call on you for support whenever it is needed.

Practices such as "small talk" with employers about their business or questions to coworkers about their jobs can convey your interest in the business and the work that is performed there. In order to be able to respond immediately to any crisis, two staff members carry beepers with them when they are off-site. Staff also exchange weekly schedules so they can reach each other throughout the day.

C. Flexible, individually-designed supports. Each specific job situation is designed to be meaningful to the individual (based on their interests) and tailored to their abilities. The amount of job staff support an individual receives may vary from staff on-site at all times to support several times each day to a minimal "check" on a biweekly basis. Generally, the staff support "fades" over time, but additional support can be brought in during times of transition (e.g., new supervisor) or crisis (e.g., family death).

> Tina is a young woman who works at a local insurance company. When she first started her job, she needed staff with her almost all of time. Over a period of several months, the staff support was faded. Now staff come in only at the end of each work day to quality control the work or at times when new procedures are needed. Tina currently receives minimum wage for 20 hours of work/week. She has the option to work more, but has chosen not to do so due to the effect on her SSI benefits. Tina receives support

during the day from her supervisor at the insurance company and through use of a step-by-step book that outlines in pictures and words "task analysis" of her job. Tina needed some "special" aids for jobs such as sorting, but these were easily adapted from materials commonly available in office supply stores.

D. Commitment to the individual. Unlike agencies that develop jobs and match the people to the available slots, Community Work Services makes a commitment to the individual. Community Work Services agrees to develop the supports the individual needs to maintain the job and to make the adaptations necessary for the person to be successful at the job site. Services are available for as long and often as needed for each person. It is clear that in this service, maintaining a certain percentage placement rate is not the goal. Here the focus is on J. S. and M. J. getting the supports they need to continue to work at their jobs on an ongoing basis.

E. On-site job training. Unlike most traditional vocational services that focus on preparing a person for a job and then matching the "job-ready" client with a job, Community Work Services does job training at the integrated job site. Thus, the person is doing the actual job with supports versus being prepared in a segregated environment under very different environmental conditions for an often unknown job. This on-site job training reflects a very promising approach, particularly for people with severe disabilities, who may have

difficulty generalizing learning from one environment to another.

F. Staffing issues. Community Work Services has both individualized job sites and clustered job sites where two to four people may be working in the same building (but not necessarily at the same location within the building). For example, in the city-county building, two people are working in the social services department and two are working in the city clerk's office. Staff, in this way, can be on-site (in the building) and easily accessible if needed. When staff are needed at all times at a clustered site, the primary staff are often relieved for a period each day by hourly staff. This way, the main staff can be freed to do spot checks at other sites. Community Work Services always has at least two staff who know the person, the job, and the site very well.

Staff sheduling in this type of service is very complex. Staff meetings are used to develop timelines (e.g., startup of new jobs is particularly time-consuming) and to work out the continually changing schedule. Staff flexibility is key.

IV. Conclusion

This report is just a sampling of some of the "promising practices" of Community Work Services and its approach to integrated, individually arranged and individually meaningful vocational services.

For more information about this service, please contact:

Betsy Shiraga
or
Kim Kessler
1245 E. Washington Avenue
Suite 276
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 255-8711

JAR:amw